

# News Release

# Senator Pete V. Domenici

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## DOMENICI: NEW MEXICO CITIES, COUNTIES TO SHARE \$3 MILLION FOR BORDER DRUG CASE WORK

### President to Sign Bill with Emergency Funds for Southwest Border Work

ALBUQUERQUE -- U.S. Senator Pete Domenici today highlighted the fact that local prosecutors in New Mexico will soon share \$3 million in emergency funding he helped secure to reimburse counties and cities for the costs of prosecuting federal drug cases.

Domenici, a Senate Appropriations Committee member, confirmed that a total of \$12 million, to be shared equally by New Mexico, Texas, Arizona and California, is included in a \$11.2 billion emergency supplemental appropriations package that only needs President Clinton's signature to become law. The emergency funding was added to the FY2001 Military Construction Appropriations Bill, which Clinton has indicated he will sign.

The \$3 million secured for New Mexico will be used to reimburse county and city governments for court costs, county and district attorney costs, criminal proceedings expenditures, and indigent defense, Domenici said.

"The volume of federal drug cases is multiplying exponentially, and our border communities are helping cover the costs associated with illegal immigration, drug and alien smuggling. This emergency funding will allow the federal government to begin meeting its obligation to make restitution for the assistance it receives from cities and counties," Domenici said.

This funding was requested by Domenici and Senators Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-Texas), and Jon Kyl (R-Ariz.)

"There is an absolute need for the federal government to give more attention to the growing demands on the Southwest Border, particularly in terms of trying to contain illegal activities," Domenici said. "I'm pleased we were successful in getting this funding, but we need to do more than act on an emergency basis to ensure we have adequate resources to meet border needs."

In an effort to address exploding caseloads in courts along the border, Domenici has cosponsored the **Southwest Border Judgeship Act of 2000**, which will provide eight permanent and five temporary judgeships for border federal courts in Arizona, California, New Mexico and Texas. New Mexico would receive two judges, one permanent and one temporary.

In New Mexico, the Las Cruces federal court now handles 65 percent of the federal criminal cases in the state, but it has no sitting federal judge. Magistrates and a senior judge handle the entire caseload.

The five U.S. district courts that would receive the 13 extra judges handle 26 percent of all criminal cases in the United States. Between 1994 and 1998, criminal filings in these five courts increased from 6,460 to 14,517. The average caseload per judge in these courts is four times the national average.

Domenici, Senate Budget Committee chairman, also serves on the Commerce, Justice, State and the Judiciary Subcommittee that provides funding for U.S. Justice Department activities, including the U.S. District Courts.